

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 6569

### AN ACT CONCERNING REPORTING OF SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES.

Representative Fleischmann, Senator Gaffey and Members of the Education Committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Michelle Polek and I am currently a senior at Enrico Fermi High School, in Enfield. I speak as a concerned student not for myself, for I will soon graduate, but for the scores of youth that will come after me and be affected by these proposed graduation requirements.

As a senior in high school, I have experienced almost thirteen years in Connecticut's school system. Changes could be made and I commend Connecticut's legislature for taking the initiative, but this plan in its current form more than mildly disturbs me. I am a high-achieving honors student and am in the top ten of my class. I am presently multiple college-level courses at my school; I have also taken Chinese at my community college. I would like to stress that under this plan, I would not graduate because I have 24 credits rather than 25. Often, scheduling difficulties impedes a student's ability to take classes – I and many close to me have had to make the choice of taking a study hall or resigning ourselves to a “filler” course of no real ultimate use to our higher education.

On the opposite side of the spectrum are people like my brother. A middle school student diagnosed with ADHD, he struggles to get through average classes. For him, meeting these requirements without intensive additional support would be implausible.

Students that do not come from idealistic backgrounds also cannot be forgotten. Jean Haughey, our director at Enfield Youth Services, can attest to the drastic effect of a child's home life on his or her education – many Connecticut kids' learning suffers as a result of a low-income situation and/or a broken home. It seems logical that raising the graduation requirements – standards to which these types of kids struggle to already attain – will not necessarily result in improvement in all of Connecticut's students. Not every student is the same, learns the same, or has the same future plans. Labeling and boxing all into this same inflexible directive thus seems the opposite of what Connecticut students need. I fear for those who come after me; I fear that that many of Connecticut's students will falter.